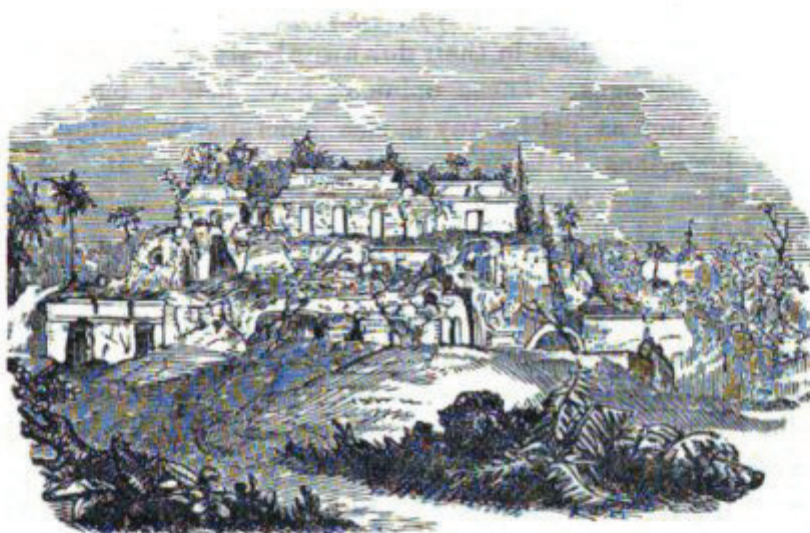


1870

RUINED CITIES
OF
CENTRAL AMERICA.



RUINS OF LABPHAK IN YUCATAN.

CIVILIZATION of the Ancient Mexicans—Recent discoveries of the Ruined Cities—Expeditions of Del Rio and Du Paix—Labphak—the Traveler Stephens—Description of the Ruins of Copan, Palenque, Uxmal, Chichen and Kabah—Artificial Fountains—Print of the Red Hand—Speculations concerning the Origin of the Builders of these Cities—Evidences of an Ancient Civilization in various Parts of the American Continent.

THERE is more of melancholy in the interest attached to an inquiry into the vestiges of the past throughout America, than in that connected with similar researches throughout the civilized portions of the Old World. In the latter we start from a highly-developed state of civilization, to seek for the slender source whence the mighty stream has sprung; and when we have found this, we turn round with a feeling of delight and wonder to mark the blessings which it has spread as it extended. Even in cases where a great nation and a mighty civilization have ceased to occupy a place in the world, we have nevertheless the assurance that this civilization laid the germ of another, which succeeded it, and that though absorbed and superseded, it has not been fruitless, or utterly lost. In America the case is different: the civilization which now flourishes in many portions of this extensive continent is in no manner connected with its past history or its ancient inhabitants; it has, on the contrary, proved the most inveterate foe of both, with contemptuous

superiority leaving the first utterly unheeded, while with relentless cupidity it has persecuted the latter almost to extermination; and it is not until within a comparatively very recent period that the intruders on the soil of the New World, have stopped to consider whether the history of the despised and persecuted Red man might not be worthy of some attention. That this is the case is now generally admitted; and the conclusions toward which almost all the inquiries into the early history and past civilization of the red race of America seem to tend, are indeed, of the utmost interest, as they lead to a strong presumption that the nations and tribes inhabiting these regions at the period of the arrival of the Spaniards, were not people emerging from a state of barbarism, and slowly working their way up in the social scale, but that, on the contrary, they were descendants of a more civilized race, sinking gradually from the high position they had once maintained, while some of them, having outstepped the others in their downward career, had already sunk into the condition of savages. These opinions have indeed but slowly gained ground, and are not as yet by any means generally entertained. So accustomed have historians hitherto been to see a movement from barbarism upward, that when the European foot first stumbled over the vestiges of an ancient and extinct civilization in the wilds of America, speculative intellects at once set to work to find out what could have been the race that preceded the Red men in the occupation of these countries, and which had probably been exterminated by them.

When the Spaniards, in 1517—after twenty-five years' occupation of the West India islands, their first discoveries in the New World—landed upon the coasts of Central America, they were struck with amazement at the contrast between the state of the countries which now opened to their view, and those with which they had previously become acquainted in these regions. Instead of naked and timid savages, gathered together in tribes independent of, and often hostile to, each other, struggling for subsistence amid the difficulties of uncultivated nature, and unacquainted with the simplest arts of civilized life, they here beheld populous nations living under the dominion of powerful monarchs, subject to the rule of systematic governments and established laws, skilled in arts and manufactures, enjoying all the benefits of organized society, and dwelling in cities which seemed to the dazzled eyes of the new-comers, to rival in magnificence those of the Old World.

The city of Mexico, situated in an extensive plain, and built partly on the banks of a large lake, and partly on several small islands on its bosom, was, at the time of the Spanish invasion, approached by artificial roads thirty feet in width, and extending from two to three miles in length. The temples dedicated to the religious worship of the people, the palaces of the monarch, and the dwellings of persons of distinction, were, according to the description of the invaders, of gigantic dimensions and magnificent structure, while the habitations of the lower orders were of the humblest character, being merely huts resembling those of the Indians of the rudest tribes. The building assigned to Cortez and his companions when they visited as friends the monarch whose downfall they were plotting, was a house built by the father of Montezuma, spacious enough to accommodate all the Spaniards and their

Indian allies. It consisted, according to the description of the former, of apartments ranged around extensive courtyards, the whole being inclosed by a stone wall with towers, which served for defense as well as ornament. The most striking architectural features in the city of Mexico were the temples; and foremost among these, was the great Teocalli—that is, House of God—situated in the principal square, and one of the first destroyed by the Spaniards when they became masters of the city. This temple, which was dedicated to Tezcatlopica, the god first in rank after Teoth, the Supreme Being, and to Meritli, the god of war, consisted of a truncated pyramid formed by five terraces, ascended by broad flights of steps. The sides of the pyramid faced the four cardinal points; its base was 318 feet long, and its perpendicular height 121 feet. It was stated by the Mexicans themselves, to have been built on the model of great pyramids of a similar nature, which were spread over the face of the country, and which the traditions of the people ascribed to the Toltecs, the nation from whom they had received their civilization. On the truncated top of the pyramid were placed the sacrificial stone and the statues of the gods, among which those of the sun and moon were of colossal dimensions, and covered with plates of gold. Around the main building was a wall of hewn stone, ornamented with knots of serpents in bas-relief. Within the precincts of the wall, or immediately adjoining it, were the dwellings of the priests. Edifices of a similar character were represented as existing throughout Mexico and the adjoining countries; and the capital itself, was said to contain no less than eight temples almost equal in size to that just described, beside two thousand of inferior dimensions.

On nearer inquiry, however, into the state of that civilization which was at first so highly lauded by the Spaniards, as hardly inferior to that of Europe, it was ascertained that neither the Mexicans nor the nations bordering upon their empire, and who in a great measure participated in their civilization, were acquainted with the use of iron, without which, it has been observed, no nation can advance far in the arts of civilized life; that they had not any tame animals trained to assist man in his labors; that they were unacquainted with the art of writing, and even with the use of hieroglyphics—having no other means of conveying to succeeding ages an account of the past than by the imperfect and tedious process of picture-painting, which, however, they had carried to a considerable degree of perfection; that communication between the different provinces of the empire was rendered almost impossible by the absence of roads and the density of the forests, which in a great measure covered the face of the country; that commercial intercourse had attained no higher degree of development than was consistent with a system of barter—the only approach to a standard of value being the establishment of the beans of the cocoa as an instrument of commercial interchange, chocolate being a beverage in universal use throughout the country; and that the religion of the Mexicans, though formed into a regular system, bore the character of a gloomy and atrocious superstition, their divinities—worshiped under the form of stone idols of hideous aspect—being represented as sanguinary and revengeful beings, delighting in the sufferings of the human victims sacrificed on their altars, and having their temples decorated with the

effigies of serpents, tigers, crocodiles, and other ferocious animals. These facts, together with the still more significant circumstance, that they were surrounded by tribes, who, in proportion to their distance from this center of civilization, approached nearer and nearer to a state of savage brutality, seemed sufficient to establish the opinion that the Mexican nation was still in its infancy, and separated by only a few centuries from the condition in which its ruder neighbors were still merged. The traditions of the Mexicans, as they were understood, did not indeed assign to their empire any great antiquity; Montezuma, the monarch who ruled over them at the period of the arrival of Cortez, being, according to their own accounts, only the ninth ruler since their establishment in those territories. But it will be remembered that they assigned their civilization to an anterior race; this was, however, considered a fond conceit common to every people of recent date.

Whatever may in reality have been the state of civilization in the newly-discovered world, its want of vigor was soon proved by its utter subjugation to that of the old. Fifty years after the first landing of the Spaniards on the coast of Yucatan, their authority was established over almost the whole of the vast territory of Central America; and a few years later, the number of the original inhabitants of these countries was so much reduced, that the accounts of their former populousness seemed fabulous. Their monarchs and various rulers were deposed, and put to death, their religion was proscribed and persecuted, their temples and palaces were destroyed, their cities razed to the ground, their idols broken into fragments, or when this could not be effected, buried in the earth, and the dwindled remains of their population reduced to a miserable state of servitude. Even now—when republican institutions have been established throughout the countries which once acknowledged the sway of Spain, and when the inhabitants of all colors and all races are recognized as equal before the law—the poor Indian, in whom every trace of the spirit of a free man has been obliterated, bends meekly before the superior race, kisses the hand which inflicts the punishment of the lash, and repeats the words which have become proverbial among the Spanish Americans—‘The Indians do not hear except through their backs.’

Beyond the boundaries of the Mexican and Peruvian empires, and the countries immediately adjoining them, the inhabitants of the American continent were divided into small tribes, independent of each other, destitute of industry and arts, forming no regularly-organized societies, and living altogether in a state so rude as to come under the denomination of savages. The physical features of the various tribes distributed over that vast continent were, however, so uniform, that it at once became evident that although in different stages of civilization, they all belonged to the same race, and were merely subject to such modifications as would necessarily arise from the differences in the natural features of the districts which they inhabited, and the state of the society to which they belonged. Thus in the more northerly regions of the North American continent, where the English made their first settlements, the Indians were in a much ruder state than in Central America, but possessed a more warlike spirit and greater physical vigor; and the struggle between them and the invaders of their country was consequently of

longer duration, and of a somewhat different character. Here the Red men never submitted, and the European settlers could not boast of having conquered the land until they had utterly expelled or exterminated the tribes to whom it belonged by right of prior occupation. As to the country itself, with the exception of the territories occupied by the Mexicans and Peruvians, and to a certain degree those immediately adjoining them, it was untouched by the hand of industry, and presented throughout one great uncultivated wilderness, save where a small patch of Indian corn proved the neighborhood of a native encampment. It was covered with immense forests, which, particularly in the southern, and naturally most fertile regions, were rendered almost impervious by the rank luxuriance of vegetation. The vast plains were overflowed by the constant inundations of the rivers, and were converted into unwholesome and impenetrable marshes. In a word, nature presented throughout a picture of wild desolation, though abounding in all the features most favorable to the development of civilization and prosperity. Though we may dwell with pleasure on the idea of some of the richest and most fertile regions of the habitable globe having been redeemed from such a state to one of high cultivation, and of millions of civilized men reveling in comfort and luxury in countries where nature, left to herself, barely furnished food for a few straggling savages, yet it is melancholy to reflect that a Christian and civilized race has superseded the aboriginal inhabitants of these lands, without having in any instance succeeded in extending to the latter the advantages to which they owe their own superiority; that while expending on the soil the benefit of cultivation, and causing it to yield rich harvests in return for their labor, they, the followers of a religion which teaches man to see in his fellow-man, of whatever race or color, a brother, should not only have left the aborigines in the same degraded state in which they found them, but that they should have disseminated their vices where they knew not how to implant their virtues. If the Anglo-Saxon race can plead in their excuse the wild and intractable character of the savages with whom they had to deal, the same plea will not extend to the Spaniards, whose Indian subjects were docile and submissive to a fault. The incapacity of the Indians for improvement has, however, been observed and dwelt upon by all travelers; and this may perhaps account for so little interest having for a long while been taken in their former civilization, and so few endeavors made, until within the last century, to trace it to its origin. Indeed so little credence was generally attached to any high state of civilization having existed in these regions previous to the Spanish conquest, that when the ancient remains of which we are about to treat were first brought to light by the industry of adventurous travelers, all minds set to work to discover who could have been the authors of these remarkable works, few being inclined to ascribe them to the ancestors of the despised race which had been so easily subjugated by small bands of Spanish adventurers. So little, indeed, was the existence of these monuments known, that the able, philosophic, and conscientious Scottish historian, Dr. Robertson, in his 'History of America,' published 1777, affirmed, on the authority of persons long resident in those countries, that there was not throughout Spanish America 'a single monument or vestige of any building more ancient than

the Conquest;' and his general estimation of the state of the inhabitants of those countries, at that period, led him to the conclusion that the progenitors of the American race must have been in a very barbarous state when they left the cradle of mankind to populate these unknown regions.

In one of his reports to Charles V, Cortez describes his manner of proceeding in Mexico as follows:—'I formed the design of demolishing on all sides all the houses in proportion as we became masters of the streets, so that we should not advance a foot without having destroyed and cleared out whatever was behind us.' These words characterize the policy of the Spaniards throughout the whole of New Spain—a policy followed up during two centuries, and resulting in the almost total obliteration from the face of the country of every trace of the state of things which preceded their arrival. The few ruins that were left to tell the tale of desolation, and the gigantic pyramidal structures—which the untiring industry of the conquered race had reared, and which even the insatiable hatred of their conquerors was unable to destroy—remained utterly unheeded, failing to awaken the interest of the natives of Spanish descent, and lying beyond the reach of European curiosity through the jealous policy of Spain, which placed innumerable impediments in the way of explorers. However, at the commencement of the present century the illustrious Humboldt, braving all difficulties in pursuance of those scientific objects to which he devoted his life, visited New Spain; and through his reports Europe learned, for the first time, from an authority which admitted of no doubt, the existence of ruins fully confirming the statements of the early Spanish writers relative to the cities and temples of Mexico. Since then, tourists innumerable, scientific and unscientific, have visited and explored the ruins of Mexico; but the territory which stretches from Mexico to the Isthmus of Darien, including the peninsula of Yucatan, remained for a long time comparatively unknown. Yet within the impenetrable forests of those very partially-cultivated states are concealed the most remarkable remains of ancient cities, many of whose buildings and sculptures are in a state of such extraordinary preservation, as to render it difficult to believe that they have been abandoned for centuries.

In the year 1750, some Spaniards traveling in the interior of Mexico are said to have penetrated into the province of Chiapas, and to have discovered there, either by chance or through means of information received from the Indians, the remains of a city consisting of ancient stone buildings, and extending, according to their account, over an area of from eighteen to twenty-four miles. So utterly unknown had the city been until then, that no tradition of the country gives any clue even to its name. Among the few Indians who were acquainted with the existence of the ruins, they were known as Las Casas de Piedras—that is, The Stone Houses—and the travelers who have since explored them have bestowed upon them the appellation of Palenque, from the name of the little village in the vicinity of which they are situated. The news of this discovery, though it reached the ears of the Spanish authorities, failed to awaken their interest. Thirty years afterward, however, the king of Spain sent out an exploring commission under the direction of Captain Del Rio, and subsequently another under Captain Du

Paix; but by adverse circumstances the reports of both these gentlemen were withheld from publication for many years, and it is thus only within the last twenty-five years that any authentic accounts of these interesting remains of by-gone civilization have become known to the world in general. Since the publication of the report of the two above-named gentlemen, the ruins have been visited and carefully explored by several enterprising travelers. The last among these, as far as we are aware, was Mr. Stephens, the well-known American writer and traveler, who published in 1839 and in 1842 the result of his researches, illustrated with numerous engravings.

In the course of his journey through the several provinces of Honduras, Guatemala, Chiapas, Tabasco, and the peninsula of Yucatan, Mr. Stephens met with no less than forty-four ruined cities, the greater number situated within short distances of each other in Yucatan, but buried in the depths of forests, without any visible means of communication, and in many cases unknown to the populations within a few hundred yards of whose doors they are. The term *city*, which it is customary to apply to these interesting remains, conjures up in the mind a picture very different from that which in reality they present; for nowhere among these ruins have there been found any remains of the dwelling-places of those classes which in all countries and in all times must form the bulk of the population of a city. The buildings that remain are all of a stately character, seemingly intended for the abode of princes, or devoted to the religious worship of a people who decorated with fond reverence the temples of their gods. No general terms will, however, suffice to give a clear conception of that which is so different from all with which we are familiar in the Old World; and we will therefore survey in detail such of the cities and their structures as present certain features common to all.

Though varying in many of their minor features, these ancient remains bear, nevertheless, a strong resemblance to each other—the most general characteristic being the truncated pyramids already alluded to. These, rising in terraces from the level plain, as shown in the elevation of the noble ruins of Labphak in Yucatan, are usually crowned with edifices of vast extent, and richly decorated with sculpture. It is a class of objects the more interesting, as they at once connect the ruined cities of Central America with the aboriginal remains throughout the whole North American continent, and likewise show a kindred relation between the builders of these cities and the inhabitants of Mexico at the time of the Conquest.

The ruined city of Copan is situated in the province of Honduras, on the left bank of the river Copan, an unnavigable stream which empties itself into the Montagua. Nature has taken entire possession of the site which man has abandoned. Where the hum of busy populations must once have been heard—where the intellect of man may once have wrought and wrangled, there now reigns the dark and silent seclusion of the forest, save when some inquisitive traveler breaks in upon it in quest of the secrets of the past. Though little more than thirty years had intervened since Del Rio attacked it with fire and ax, laying bare the environs of the ruins, the forest was, on the arrival of Mr. Stephens and his companions, so dense, that they were

obliged to work their way forward hatchet in hand. The extent of the ruins of Copan along the left bank of the river is about two miles, but how far they extend into the depths of the forest it has been impossible to ascertain. On the opposite bank of the river, at a distance of about a mile, a ruin has been observed on the top of a mountain 2000 feet high, which may probably have belonged to the city; the latter may consequently have spread in this direction also. Of palaces, or other dwellings, there are no remains in this place; but running along the river from north to south is a wall 624 feet in length, and from sixty to ninety feet high, forming one of the sides of an oblong inclosure, which it is customary to denominate the Temple, and the other three sides of which are formed by a succession of pyramidal structures and terraced walls, measuring from thirty to one hundred and forty feet in height. The river wall is built of hewn stones from three to six feet in length, and one hundred and twelve feet in breadth, and still is in a very good state of preservation. It is accessible from the river side by flights of steps, leading also on the inner-side down into the inclosed area. The line of survey taken by Stephens was 2866 feet; but the walled structures embraced within it, do not present themselves to the eye in unbroken ranges, but are in many parts in a state of decay, and in others are concealed by the trees which have introduced themselves wherever they have found sufficient soil for their roots, and which cover most, and especially, all the level areas.

At a short distance from the south-west angle of the river wall of the Temple, are two small pyramidal structures, one of which is concealed with a part of the city wall, running along the left bank of the river, and which seems to have planked a gateway, probably the principal entrance from the river side. Running at right angles with the river, and somewhat within the boundary marked by these structures, is the southern wall of the Temple, beginning with a range of steps about thirty feet high. At the south-eastern extremity of this wall, is another massive pyramidal structure. To the east of this are the remains of terraces and earthen pyramids, and a passage twenty feet wide, which seems to have formed a gateway. From hence the south-eastern corner of the quadrangle surveyed, stretches northward another massive pyramidal structure; and at a short distance, in the same direction, is a detached pyramid, about fifty feet square at the base, and thirty feet high. To the right of the latter a confused range of terraces branches off into the depths of the forest. The range of the Temple walls, running from south to north, continues for a distance of about four hundred feet, and then turning at right angles to the left, runs again southward, and joins the other extremity of the river wall. Within the area inclosed by these walls are other terraces, and pyramids one hundred and forty feet high on the slope, inclosing two smaller areas or courtyards, one of which, situated near the eastern boundary wall, is two hundred and fifty feet square, and the other, close to the river wall, one hundred and forty feet by ninety—both being forty feet above the level of the river, and accessible by steps cut in the sides of the sloping walls that inclose them.

Down the sides of all the walls and pyramids, and covering the ground of the quadrangular inclosures, are innumerable remains of sculpture, some

still maintaining their original position, others forming heaps of fragments, among which, however, many blocks are remarkably well preserved. Half-way up the sides of one pyramid are rows of death's heads of colossal proportions, but which, from their peculiar conformation, are supposed to represent the skulls of monkeys, and not of men—a supposition which is strengthened by the fact, that among the fragments at the foot of the pyramid was found the effigy of a colossal ape or baboon, bearing a strong resemblance to the animals of the same species originally figured on the great obelisk from the ruins of Thebes, which now graces the Place de la Concorde in Paris. These animals were worshiped at Thebes under the name of Cynocephali, and it has been thought not unlikely that the same may have been the case among the ancient inhabitants of Copan. Among the fragments on the ground were also several human heads, sculptured, like those of the apes, in bold relief, and impressing the beholder with the belief that they were portraits—nature being closely followed, and the features and expression of the countenance of each bearing a strong individual character. None of these heads are encumbered with the extraordinary head-dresses which form a striking feature in the generality of the sculptured figures in the ruined cities of Central America. The whole of the sides of the terraced walls and pyramids have seemingly been decorated with similar sculptures, which were fixed by stone tenons, in many cases still adhering to them, and which were driven into the wall. In many cases traces of color are still visible, indicating that these sculptures, like those of many of the ancient nations of the Old World, had been painted.

At the foot of one of the pyramidal walls in the courtyard most distant from the river, stands one of the monuments which form the peculiar characteristics of the ruins of Copan. These are stone columns or obelisks, from eleven to thirteen feet in height, and from three to four feet in width, and something less in depth, in every case having on the principal face a human figure, male or female, sculptured in high relief, presenting its full front, and having the upper part of the arm pressed close in to the body, and the lower part brought forward, so as to allow of the hands being pressed against the breast. They are all clad in rich garments, some in the form of short tunics, others more like long pantaloons. The feet, which are of clumsy form, are generally covered with a kind of buskin; and the heads are adorned with coverings of the most fanciful description, the details of which can hardly be detached from the mass of intricate sculptured ornaments with which the monuments are covered on all sides from top to base. The idol (for such these objects are supposed to have been) to which we have particularly alluded differs from others in its vicinity, inasmuch as it is broader at top than below, while the sculpture is in lower relief. The face is of a calm and placid expression, and the sculptured ornaments, though difficult to define, are graceful and pleasing in design. The back and sides of the monument are covered with hieroglyphics, which, as will be seen, abound among the sculptured remains in the ruined cities, and prove that, if the inhabitants of these regions were not in possession of such characters at the time of the Conquest, the nations or generations which preceded them were fully

acquainted with the use of these written signs. In front of the idol is an altar, four feet high, and six feet square, of one block of stone, and resting on four globes cut out of the same material. The bas-reliefs on the sides represent a series of sixteen human figures, seated cross-legged, in Oriental fashion. Each bears in his hand a weapon, the precise character of which it is difficult to ascertain, but in which some archæologists persist in seeing only spiral shells; and the heads of all are covered with very peculiar head-dresses without plumes. On the side facing the west are the two principal figures of the series, sitting with their faces toward each other, as if engaged in discussion, while seven of the other fourteen figures, turning their heads in the direction of each, seem to form their respective retinues. The top of the altar is divided into thirty-six tablets of hieroglyphics, probably recording the important transaction which the two parties have met to discuss. That precise rules had not existed relative to the costume of the day, may be concluded from the circumstance, that of the sixteen head-dresses not two are alike; and though we are unwilling to believe that the extraordinary facial angles represented could be meant to portray really existing faces, still, it must be admitted that there is likewise much variety in the countenances.

From the pyramidal terrace forming the outer wall of the smaller court within the temple, there is a subterraneous passage leading to the river wall, and below this a sepulchral vault was opened by Colonel Galindo, who explored the ruins some years ago on account of the Mexican government. On each side of the vault, which is six feet high, and ten feet long, by five and a half in width, are small niches, which, at the time of the opening, contained numerous earthenware vessels of different descriptions, filled with human bones, and packed in lime. The floor of the vault, paved with stones, and coated with lime, was strewn with various articles, such as stone knives, stalactites, marine shells, and a small death's head, cut in a green stone, and described as of exquisite workmanship.

At some distance from the inclosure denominated the Temple, in a level area, inclosed by terraced walls, stands a group of eight stone idols, similar in form and size, and in the position of the hands, to the one above described, but each having a distinct individual character. They are placed at distances of from fifty to two hundred feet from each other, and in front of each is an altar of corresponding character. The chief object of the sculptor having evidently been to inspire awe and terror, he has endeavored to produce the desired effect by exaggeration of feature, and has, in consequence, in some cases represented countenances ludicrously hideous; others have, however, a purely terrific expression, and one or two are, on the contrary, pleasing. The workmanship displayed in some of these monuments is considered equal to the finest Egyptian sculpture, but in others it is more rude. Some are covered on all sides with hieroglyphics, and are for that reason the most interesting in the eyes of antiquaries, as there is always a hope that the industry which found a clue to the hieroglyphics of Egypt may also one day be able to unravel the mysteries of Central America. The engraving on the following page exhibits on a very minute scale the front and back of one of these gigantic 'dols, every inch of which is covered with ornamental sculp-

tures and hieroglyphics. At the foot of one of them is a colossal sculptured head of an alligator, half-buried in the earth. In one only of the ruined cities have there been found monuments similar to the idols of Copan. At some distance from the ruins, deep in the heart of the wide-spreading forest, are the quarries whence have been drawn the materials for all the monuments we have surveyed.

Palenque, Uxmal, Kabah, and Chichen, the four other cities which seem to us the most remarkable, offer a character different from that of Copan, inasmuch as the pyramidal structures in these places are still crowned with edifices of a stately and magnificent character, and the pyramids and terraces are in a much better state of preservation. The ruins designated by the name of Palenque are, as before observed, situated in the province of Chiapas, and have borrowed their name from a neighboring village. With regard to the extent of these ruins, accounts differ: according to the Indians and the other inhabitants of the village of Palenque—who do not, however, seem to have any real knowledge of the subject, but whose imaginations delight in adding to the marvelous character of the remains in their neighborhood—they cover an area of no less than sixty miles; Du Paix and Del Rio give them a circuit of seven leagues; while Waldeck maintains that they cover a surface of only one league, or about three miles. How far any of these accounts are correct it would perhaps be difficult to ascertain, as the surrounding country is covered for miles with a forest of gigantic trees, rendered more dense by an impenetrable growth of underwood. In their descriptions of the Casas de Piedras, the most interesting and important objects among these remains, all the explorers agree. When Del Rio visited them, they were fourteen in number, disposed around a rectangular area 450 yards by 300—five being on the north side, four on the south, one on the south-west, and three on the east, while the largest of the group occupied a central position. Mr. Stephens mentions only five as being in a good state of preservation, and describes them, on first view, as being ‘in style and effect unique, extraordinary, and mournfully beautiful.’ The largest building stands upon an oblong mound forty feet high, formed by human labor, having originally been faced with stone, and measuring at the base 310 feet by 260. The building itself is 200 feet long, and 180 feet deep, while the height of the walls is no more than twenty-five feet. It is constructed of stone and mortar, coated with stucco, and has originally been painted, the remains of red, yellow, blue, black and white paint, being still visible in many places. The front faces the east and contains fourteen doorways, separated by square piers adorned with



spirited figures in stucco. Around the top runs a broad, projecting stone cornice. The principal doorway is indicated by a flight of broad stone steps in the side of the terrace leading up to it. On the other sides of the palace, which are in a more dilapidated condition, it would seem there have been similar doorways, all giving access to a corridor running around the building, and communicating by two doors only, with a second corridor running parallel with it. Adjoining these corridors, are ranges of chambers communicating by doorways and flights of steps, with an open courtyard on a lower level, but inclosed by the walls of the palace; such, indeed, are generally the interior arrangements of the buildings in these ruined cities. In cases where there are no courtyards, the back rooms receive light through doorways communicating with front rooms or corridors, these likewise being devoid of all apertures excepting doorways opening upon the platforms without. In one of the courts or open areas at the Palace of Palenque, is a stone tower, thirty feet square at the base, and three stories high. The purpose for which it has served is difficult to divine, as the outer wall forms but a shell surrounding an inner structure, presenting no visible means of entrance. Between the outer wall and this inner structure is a very narrow staircase, leading up to the top, but terminating abruptly against a dead stone ceiling. Within the precincts of the palace are other detached and much ruined buildings, the character of which it is consequently difficult to define. From the door of the inner corridor on the front side of the building, a flight of stone steps, thirty feet broad, leads down into the principal courtyard, a rectangular area eighty feet by seventy; and on the opposite side is a similar flight corresponding with a corridor in the interior of the building. On each side of both these flights of steps are sculptured bas-reliefs of grim human figures, nine or ten feet high. Some are standing, others kneeling; others seated cross-legged; and the greater number have one or both hands pressed against the breast, as if expressive of suffering, which is also depicted in some of the upturned faces. The forms are uncouth, and the proportions incorrect; but there is a certain force of expression in the countenances and attitudes, which renders them interesting even as specimens of artistic skill. We should far surpass our limits were we to attempt to give a detailed description of the sculptured bas-reliefs, and the figures and groups in stucco, which decorate in rich profusion the walls of the innumerable rooms and corridors in the palace, and are here and there interspersed with tablets of hieroglyphics. We shall therefore limit ourselves to saying that the figures are, as regards the style of countenance, dress, and indeed their whole appearance, unlike those of any other known monuments. But though many of the strange bodily deformities which they exhibit may be attributed to want of skill in the artist, there are nevertheless certain peculiarities of physical conformation which recur so constantly, as to impress the beholder with the belief that such, or nearly such, have been the prevalent forms among the people whom they represent. Among these peculiarities, the form of the heads—flattened behind, and elongated on the top—is particularly remarkable, and would seem to indicate that among the inhabitants of this city, as among some of the North American Indians of the present day, it has been customary to

change the natural form of the head by pressure in infancy. Large noses and protruding lips also very generally prevail. The head-dresses are distinguished by plumes of feathers in exaggerated profusion, and of the strangest forms.

The other buildings at Palenque resemble the palace in architectural and ornamental features, but are of smaller dimensions, each having for its foundation an artificial pyramidal structure. In one, the piers of the front corridor are decorated with figures of men and women with children in their arms, but they are much damaged. In the same building there are on each side of the principal doorway stone tablets, thirteen feet long, and eight feet high, covered with hieroglyphics. And it has been observed as remarkable, that these characters are the same as those found at Copan, and also in several of the ruined cities of Yucatan; thus establishing the fact, that these cities must at least have had a written language in common, though the Indians at present inhabiting the intermediate territories speak several distinct languages and are quite unintelligible to one another. On the back wall of a small oblong chamber in one of the Casas, lighted by a single low doorway, is a sculptured tablet of a very remarkable character. In the center is a cross placed upon a kind of highly-ornamented pedestal, and surmounted by an extraordinary bird, the wings and tail of which bear a strong resemblance to many of the plumes in the head-dresses to which we have alluded. Around the neck of the bird hang strings of beads, from which is suspended an ornament supposed by some to be the curious flower called by the Mexicans 'macphalxochitl,' or 'flower of the hand,' the pistil being in the form of a bird's foot, with six fingers terminating in so many nails. On each side of the cross, and with their faces turned toward it, are two male figures with the same strangely-shaped heads before-mentioned, but otherwise of great symmetry of proportion, and considered quite equal to any of the sculptured remains in Egypt. One of these figures seems in the act of making an offering to the bird, while the other is looking on. It is remarkable, as a probable indication of the figures being the portraits of living personages, that the looker-on, being considerably shorter than his companion, is mounted on a kind of footstool, in order to reach the same height. The costume of the men is different from that of all the other figures found among the ruins; for while the garments of the latter in many cases seem made of the skins of animals with the tails still attached to them, the folds of the dresses in the present case indicate that they are made of some pliable texture. These two figures occur again on another tablet, placed in a similar position in one of the other Casas. Here they are both apparently making offerings to a hideous mask, with the tongue lolling out of the mouth, and supported by two crossed batons richly ornamented. The objects offered are in this case decidedly infants, and are presented to the mask seated on the palms of the men's hands. The small chambers in which these tablets are placed, are believed to have been places for private devotion, and have, in consequence, obtained the name of 'adoratories.' The floors of these adoratories were excavated by Del Rio, and found to contain an earthen vessel and a circular stone, beneath which were a lance-head, two small pyramids with the figure of a heart made of a dark crystal, and two covered earthen jars containing a

substance of a vermilion color. Among the stucco ornaments in all these buildings there are also designs of plants and flowers; and among the fragments of sculpture Mr. Stephens mentions a beautiful head and two bodies, 'in justness of proportion and symmetry of form approaching the Greek models.' One statue only has been found among the ruins of Palenque. It is ten feet six inches high, and is more simple and severe in character than any of the other sculptured figures; so much so, indeed, that it might altogether be taken for the production of another land and another time, did not a hieroglyphic, placed in front about the middle of the body, and from which depends some symbolical ornament, at once recall to mind the idols of Copan, in which both are never-failing features. There are no windows in the palace at Palenque; but on the inner wall of the outer corridor, which it will be remembered, communicates by two doorways only with the parallel corridor within, there are apertures of about a foot in size, some in the form of the Greek cross, others in that of the Egyptian Tou. The floors are of cement, hard as that in the Roman baths, and the ceilings arched, as is invariably the case in all the apartments and corridors in the buildings of these deserted cities. The perfect arch, was unknown to their builders, as to those of many of the nations of antiquity; and their substitute for it is constructed precisely on the same plan as the Cyclopean arch, prevalent among the ancient remains of Greece and Italy. It is formed by superincumbent layers of stones overlapping each other, until the two sides of the walls approach within about a foot of each other, the top being finally covered in with a flat layer of stones.

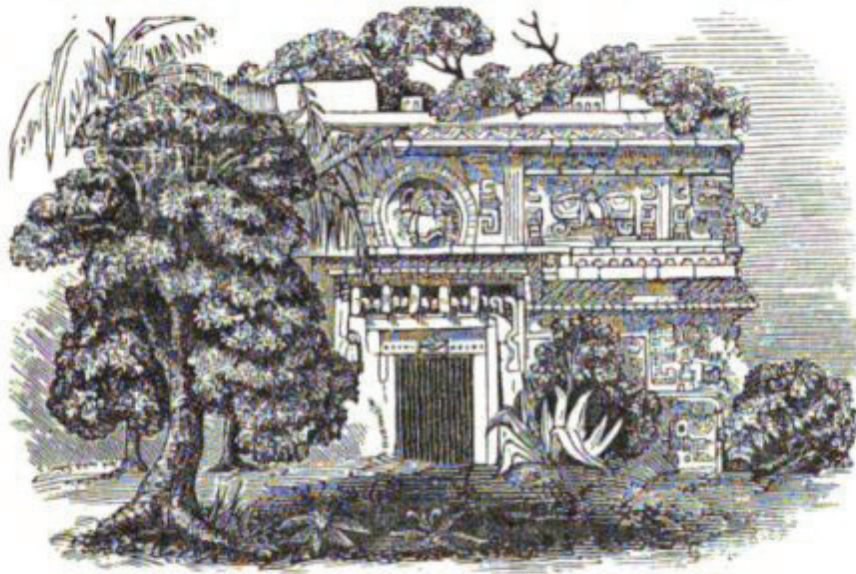
About seventeen leagues directly south of the city of Merida, in the peninsula of Yucatan, are the ruins of Uxmal, the best-preserved of which are scattered over an area 1600 feet by 1100, and consist of six distinct and extensive buildings, and a large truncated pyramid, the summit of which is not crowned with any edifice. Beside these, there are the remains of numerous other edifices, but in a state of great decay. The walls of the city may also be traced to a considerable distance. The principal building, called Casa del Gobernador, or the governor's house, occupies, like all the other important buildings that we have mentioned, the upper platform of an artificial elevation, which rises in three terraces from the level plain, and which, notwithstanding its great dimensions, bears evidence of being the work of man. The first terrace is 575 feet long, three feet high, and fifteen broad: the second is twenty feet high, 250 feet wide, and 545 feet long; the third, on which stands the stately edifice, is nineteen feet high, thirty feet broad, and 360 feet long; and the sides of all are supported by substantial stone walls, rounded at the angles. In the center of the platform of the second terrace commences a flight of steps 130 feet wide, and leading up to the third terrace immediately in front of the Casa del Gobernador, the facade of which is 322 feet long. The effect produced by the grandeur of the position, and the vastness of the dimensions of this magnificent building, is further increased by the richness of the architectural ornaments which have been lavished on the external walls. These walls are constructed entirely of stone; and from the base to the cornice—which runs all round the building immediately above the door-

ways, and about the mid-height of the building—they present a smooth surface. But above the cornice the four sides of the edifice present ‘one solid mass of rich, complicated, and elaborately-sculptured ornaments, forming a sort of arabesque.’ Above the doorways, of which there are eleven in front, and one at each end, the ornaments are, in particular, very elaborate, representing small human figures, with head-dresses of rich plumes—that above the center doorway being larger than the others. The roof of this building is flat, and was originally covered with cement; and the rear elevation is a solid stone wall nine feet thick, without doorways or apertures of any kind. Within are two parallel ranges of rooms, each range numbering as many rooms as there are doorways in the front wall, through which alone they receive the light, each back-room communicating with the corresponding front-room by a door immediately opposite the outer one. The height of this, as of all the other ruined buildings, does not correspond with the imposing breadth of the facade, it being little more than twenty-four or twenty-five feet. Apparently, the lintels of the doorways have all been of wood, and some were still in their places, and in very good condition, when examined by Mr. Stephens. This is, however, no proof against the antiquity of the buildings, as these beams are of a very hard wood, which, it is said, does not grow in the neighboring forests, but must have been transported hither from the forests near the Lake of Peten, a distance of about 300 miles. In one of these beams were carved hieroglyphics like those of Copan and Palenque; with this exception, there have been found at Uxmal no sculptured bas-reliefs or stuccoed figures as at Palenque, and no idols as at Copan. From the manner in which the sculptured ornaments on the exterior of the buildings cover the stones—the several parts of one design occupying several adjoining stones—it is evident that these must have been placed in the wall before they were sculptured.

On the terrace below that on which stands the Casa del Gobernador is another edifice, of smaller dimensions, and greater simplicity of ornament, but otherwise of the same general construction. This building is called the House of the Tortoises (*Casa de las Tortugas*), and, according to some of the explorers, owes this appellation to the form of the stones with which the rectangular court inclosed within its four wings was paved. These stones are described as being each six inches square, and exquisitely cut in demi-relief, with the full and accurate figure of a tortoise, and as being arranged in groups of four, with the heads of the tortoises together. The number required to cover the superficies of the court is said to have been 43,660. Of this interesting feature, proving an amount of skill and enterprise in the builders of the cities even surpassing that displayed in the remains still extant, we are sorry to say Mr. Stephens makes no mention. According to him, the edifice has obtained its name from a row of sculptured tortoises adorning the cornice which runs round the top of the whole building. On the same terrace as La Casa de las Tortugas are some other remains, the purpose of which is not evident. Such is, for instance, an oblong structure two hundred feet long, fifteen feet wide, and about three feet high, and along the foot of which runs a range of pedestals and broken columns. On another

part of the terrace, and within a quadrangular inclosure, is a round stone of rude and irregular appearance, eight feet high, and five feet in diameter, which has obtained from the Indians the name of the *Picote*, or the 'Whipping-Post.' Similar stones in similar positions occur in many of the ruined cities, and have therefore probably been connected with some national custom or religious rite. The same may be said of two other mysterious structures connected with the ruins of Uxmal. These are two edifices, each one hundred and twenty-eight feet long, and thirty feet deep, placed opposite to each other, seventy feet apart, and having apparently been precisely similar in plan and ornament. The sides facing each other have been embellished with sculptured ornaments, of which the coils of serpents have formed part. These edifices have no doorways or openings of any kind, and on being broken into, proved to be nothing but solid walls. In the center of each wall, and exactly opposite to each other, are the remains of two large stone rings. Two hundred and forty feet south of these structures is a group of buildings, surrounding a rectangular courtyard, entered through an arched gateway, and called the house of the Nuns (*Casa de las Monjas*). The chief wing of this group is two hundred and seventy-nine feet long, and all the buildings are more richly ornamented even than the *Casa del Gobernador*. Here, again, huge serpents form the leading feature in the sculptured ornaments. The next building stands upon an artificial, oblong mound, rounded at the extremities, and not cut in terraces as the foregoing, but rising in a very steep ascent from the plain, and accessible by a range of uncommonly steep steps. The building is, like the others, of stone, the walls being on the inside smooth and polished, and externally plain from the base to the cornice above the doorways, and from this to the roof elaborately sculptured. From the front-door of this building an inclined plain, twenty-two feet long, and paved with cement, leads down to the roof of another building, occupying a lower position, and the walls of which are likewise richly sculptured. This group goes under the name of the House of the Dwarf. The last building which we shall describe is the *Casa de los Palamos*, or the House of the Pigeons, so called from the peculiar character given to it by a range of structures elevated on the flat roof of the building, and presenting the appearance of a range of gables after the fashion of the German buildings of the middle ages, which, being perforated with small oblong openings, bear some resemblance to pigeon-houses. These structures are nine in number, are built of stone, and have all originally been covered with ornaments in stucco. In one of the noble courtyards inclosed within the different wings of this edifice is another of those strange stones to which the Indians have given the name of Whipping-Posts. It must be observed, with regard to the different appellations given to the edifices in these ruined cities, that they are entirely unconnected with the past history of the cities or of the edifices themselves, and are only applied in consequence of some fancied resemblance. At the north-east angle of the *Casa de los Palamos* is a vast range of terraces facing east and west, and encumbered with ruins, and with these we will take leave of the remains of Uxmal, though we have touched upon comparatively few of the remarkable details which they comprise.

At Chichen, another of the ruined cities of Yucatan, the surviving edifices are spread over an area of about two miles in circumference. The most beautiful, called, like one at Uxmal, Casa de las Monjas (House of the Nuns), is six hundred and thirty-eight feet in circumference, and sixty-five feet high. This unusual height, which is in fact only apparent, is owing to three ranges of buildings being erected, the one immediately above the other, yet so that each of the upper ranges, being built back, and not on the roof of the lower structure, rests on an independent foundation, while the roof of the lower range extends like a platform in front of it. Such is the mode invariably followed in these regions when the buildings have the appearance of consisting of several stories. In the present case, the second range is the most elaborately decorated, the ornaments being in the same style as those of Uxmal, and as shown in the annexed sketch of one of its facades. The



lower range seems to be nothing but a solid mass of masonry, merely intended to serve as a pedestal for the upper ranges. A grand staircase, fifty-six feet wide, leads from terrace to terrace up to the top of the building. The chief apartment in the interior of the second range, which is entered and lighted by three doorways on the south side, is forty-seven feet long, and only nine feet deep, thus having, like all the large rooms in these buildings, more the character of a gallery or corridor than of a room. In the back wall are nine oblong niches; and from the floor to the very center of the arched ceiling the walls are covered with paintings, now much effaced, but in many places still glowing with bright and vivid colors. The subjects represented have probably been processions of warriors, for human heads adorned with plumes, and hands bearing shields and spears, constantly recur.

One hundred and fifty yards east of the Monjas is a building which does not, like the generality, stand upon a raised terrace, but to which, nevertheless, the appearance of an elevated position has been given by digging out the earth for some distance in front of it. This building, the exterior of which is rude and unadorned, faces the east, and measures one hundred and forty-nine feet in front and forty-eight feet in depth. In the center of the

eastern facade is a broad staircase leading up to the roof, which is flat, as usual; and corresponding with this, on the other side of the building, is a solid mass of masonry forty-four feet by thirty-four, standing out from the wall, and serving no apparent purpose. The number of chambers within the building is eighteen, and that of the outer doorways nine. In the dark mystery of one of the back chambers is a sculptured tablet, representing a sitting figure, supposed to be engaged in the performance of some mysterious rite, and around it are several rows of hieroglyphic figures, similar to those found in the other cities. In their graphic language the Indians have denominated this building Akatzeeb—that is, “The Writing in the Dark.” North of the Monjas is another building, called by them Caracol (The Winding Staircase), different in style from any as yet described. It is circular in form, has a conical shaped roof, and stands on the highest of two terraces, to which ascent is gained by a flight of steps forty-five feet wide, and on each side of which runs a kind of balustrade, formed by the entwined bodies of two enormous serpents. In front of the steps and standing against the wall of the second terrace is a pedestal, supposed to have supported an idol. The building which stands on the second platform, is entered by four small doors facing the cardinal points. Within is a circular corridor, and within this another, to which admittance is gained by four smaller doors intermediate to the others, so as to face north-east, north-west, south-east, and south-west. This corridor encircles a cylindrical mass of solid stone, seven feet six inches in diameter, forming as it were the axis of the building. The corridors are arched in the usual manner, coated with plaster and painted.

At some distance from this singular structure are others, repeating on a grander scale what we have seen at Uxmal, and supposed to be connected with the public games of the country. Two walls, each two hundred and seventy-four feet long and thirty feet thick, run parallel with each other at a distance of one hundred and twenty feet. In the center of each wall and exactly opposite each other, at the height of twenty feet from the ground, are two massive stone rings, four feet in diameter and with serpents sculptured on the outer circle. At the distance of one hundred feet from the northern and southern extremities of the walls, and facing the open space inclosed between them, are two buildings, the one thirty-five, the other eighty feet long, situated on elevations, and each containing one room only. Both are much dilapidated; but on the inner walls of the smallest there are still traces of rich sculptures, and in front of each are the remains of two columns, also richly sculptured. On the outer side, and at the southern extremity of one of the parallel walls, stands a building surpassing in interest any as yet mentioned. It consists of two ranges—the upper one, which is best reserved, being ornamented externally with a frieze in bas-relief, representing a succession of lynxes or tigers; while the whole of the inner wall of the lower structure, laid bare by the falling of the outer wall, is likewise covered with bas-reliefs, consisting of rows of human figures interspersed with fanciful ornaments, and each row being separated from the other by an ornamental border of simple and pleasing design. The figures are all males, with buskined feet and helmet-like head-dresses adorned with plumes. The other

parts of their dress are so indistinct and different in each, as to allow full scope to the imagination, but to admit of no accurate description. Each of the figures in the upper row carries in his hand a bundle of spears, and all are painted. The upper range of the building, the front corridor of which is supported by massive pillars elaborately sculptured, presents scenes of still greater interest. Here, for the first time throughout these deserted cities, we catch a glimpse of some of the pastimes and occupations of their mysterious inhabitants, though here, again, the light by which they must be read is wanting. From the front corridor, which overlooks the open space between the walls of what Mr. Stephens denominated the Tennis-Court, a doorway—the lintel of which is a massive beam of sapote-wood richly sculptured, and the jambs of which retain traces of sculptured figures—leads to an inner chamber with walls and ceiling covered with paintings. The colors are in some places still bright and vivid, in others much effaced. Some of the figures seem dancing a war-dance with shield and spear; others are placed on low seats, seemingly of basket-work; and others, on cushions: one of these figures holds in one hand a large circular ring, like a child's hoop, which he seems intending to trundle with a short stick which he holds in his other hand. In one place is an old woman crouching down, and apparently unloading a sack, which is placed before her; and in another is a large canoe with horses and people in it, and one man falling overboard. The head-dresses worn by these figures are quite different from any others mentioned, and the men have their ears pierced, and small round plates attached to them. The colors employed are green, yellow, red, blue, and reddish-brown—the last invariably used to represent the human flesh, the tint in the female figures being a shade lighter than that used for the male.

Five hundred feet south-east of the last-described building is another, on an artificial mound rising from the level plain to a height of seventy-five feet, and ascended on two sides by flights of steps, the balustrades to which have been formed by colossal serpents. The building is not large, but highly ornamented, and commands a view of the whole surrounding plain. On the sides of one of the doorways are sculptured figures, much damaged; but the head of one, which is well preserved, shows the ears and nose pierced and decorated with rings. Facing the north is a large doorway supported by columns, the pedestals of which are richly sculptured, and leading into a chamber of uncommonly lofty proportions. The roof of this chamber is supported by square pillars, also richly sculptured, but much dilapidated.

At Kabah, likewise in Yucatan, the ruins present the same character as those already described—namely, broad and noble terraces, and lofty pyramidal structures, supporting buildings of vast extent, and loaded externally with a profusion of ornaments. The apartments within are arched, as at Uxmal and Palenque; and though more ornamented than those in the former



city, are less elaborately so than in the latter. The sculptured bas-reliefs on the jambs of a doorway in one of the buildings, representing one man in a kneeling position, and another man standing before him (see engraving), are very important, on account of the kneeling figure holding in his hand a weapon answering to the description given by Spanish historians of the swords of the Indians at the time of the discovery of Columbus: 'Swords made of wood, having a gutter in the forepart, in which were sharp-edged flints, strongly fixed with a sort of bitumen and thread.'

In the description of the cities here more particularly mentioned are comprised the main features which characterize the buildings on the different sites explored. Among the individual peculiarities presented by some of the ruins, the buildings called Casas Cerradas, or Closed Houses, deserve mention. These are buildings externally and internally in every respect resembling the great majority of those described, with the usual distribution of doorways, corridors, and inner-chambers, all completely finished, and then, apparently before the roof was closed in, having been filled up with solid masses of stone and mortar, the doorways being at the same time carefully walled up. The meaning of these buildings, like so many of the other arrangements in these extraordinary cities, remains a profound mystery.

On the first survey of these wonderful cities of palaces, buried in the bosom of the vast forests of an uncultivated region, the imagination, struck by the presence of so much grandeur and magnificence, and the total absence of all the petty details connected with the daily necessities and the daily cares of human life, conjures up to itself a race of beings exempt from these necessities and these cares, which has dwelt here in happiness and in splendor. But sober reason soon re-asserts its sway, and bids us believe that when we find traces of human habitations, there also, though hidden, we shall find indications of those conditions without which human nature cannot exist. Thus, though the sites of these cities, especially in Yucatan, seem selected with an entire disregard of that which is generally considered the first of conditions for the foundation of a city—namely, a natural supply of water—we find, upon nearer investigation, that this seeming indifference with regard to the absence of one of the first necessities of life must have been owing to the consciousness possessed by those builders of their capability of supplying by art the deficiencies of nature. The wonderful perseverance and industry of this race seem to have recoiled before no difficulties: the same hands that raised the immense artificial mounds to bear aloft their stately palaces and temples, were ready to provide artificial means to supply large populations with water. The ponds and wells which have been found buried in the depths of the forest surrounding the ruined cities, and which were until very lately believed by the inhabitants to be natural depressions of the soil, have now been ascertained to be lined with masonry; and they form a very interesting portion of the ancient works of the aborigines. Several of these ponds or Aguadas, as they are called by the natives of Spanish descent—situated on the property of a gentleman more observant than the generality of his countrymen, were entirely dried up by the heats of the summer of 1835. The proprietor, placing confidence in the current traditions that they were

artificial contrivances and the work of the Antiguos, or Ancients, as the Indians denominate the authors of the many ancient works with which their country abounds, availed himself of the opportunity to make a careful examination of the ponds, and was satisfied that on this point tradition was correct. In 1836 the pond was cleared of mud, and an artificial bottom disclosed, consisting of large flat stones, placed in several layers, the interstices being carefully filled with a reddish-brown clay. In the middle of the basin, sunk from the level of this paved foundation, were four wells eight yards deep, and five feet in diameter, and lined with stone, but at the time of which we speak filled with mud. Beside these, there were around the margin of the pond upward of four hundred pits into which the water had filtered, and which, together with the wells, were intended to furnish a supply of water during the dry season of the year, when the upper basin, which depended upon the floods of the rainy season, should be empty. On another estate, within a short distance of the one we have just mentioned, another aguada of a still more extraordinary character has been cleansed and restored to its original uses. When the mud, which covered the bottom to a depth of several feet, was cleared away, the upper basin was found to contain upward of forty wells, differing in character and construction, and from twenty to twenty-five feet in depth. These ingenious contrivances of the aborigines, to supply the natural deficiencies of the land, have proved an immense boon to their degenerate descendants and their Spanish masters; for in a country almost destitute of water-courses as Yucatan, these aguadas were of very great importance, even while their precise character was still unknown.

Beside these artificial reservoirs, which, as has been said, are scattered all over the face of the country, there are in Yucatan other wells of a most extraordinary character, of which the present inhabitants avail themselves, and which, from various indications, it is evident have also been known and resorted to by the ancient populations. One of these, in the neighborhood of the village of Bolanchen, is most remarkable, and at the same time comprises the leading features of all. The descent to this well, or these wells—for there are seven distinct basins containing water—is through the mouth of a rocky cavern, and continues through the bowels of the earth down to a perpendicular depth of 450 feet, but by a pathway in the rock 1400 feet in length, and at times so precipitous, as to necessitate the use of ladders varying from twenty to eighty feet in length. Of these ladders, which are of a most primitive description—being made of rough rounds of wood bound together with osiers—there are no less than seven to be descended and ascended by the Indians, who, from these mysterious sources, carry up on their backs during four months of each year, the full supply of water necessary for the consumption of the population of the village, amounting to 7000 souls. In other parts of the country the Indians, in their descent and ascent from wells of a similar nature, have to pass through passages in the rock so low, as to oblige them to crawl on hands and feet; on which occasion the bands passed round their foreheads, and to which the gourds containing the water are attached, are lengthened so as to allow the latter to hang below their hips, in

order that they may not protrude beyond the height of the body in this crouching attitude. The un murmuring cheerfulness with which this patient race pursue their daily task, apparently as unconscious of its laboriousness as of its dangers, affords a little insight into the qualities which render possible the construction of such works of labor as those with which the country is covered; and it further leads to the conclusion—which indeed the history of Mexico corroborates—that the monuments of the ancient civilization of America, like those of the Old World, have been the work of slaves, toiling like machines, under the direction of masters who allowed them no share in the intellectual light which gave to themselves the power, and taught them the means, of executing such stupendous undertakings.

In addition to the ingenious cisterns above described, there are among the ruins but one kind of structures which may be supposed to have served for useful purposes. These are subterraneous chambers scattered over the whole area inclosed within the walls of the cities, and about five yards or a little more in diameter, with domelike ceilings, and lined throughout with cement. Access to them is gained by circular holes in the ground, so small, that a man can with difficulty introduce his body. As many as have been explored have been found quite empty, with the exception of one, in which was found a small earthenware vessel. At first, it was suggested that these chambers might have been water-cisterns, but nearer examination proved them not to be fit for this purpose; and subsequently a more probable opinion has been adopted—namely, that they have served as depositaries for the maize or Indian corn, which was in universal use among the natives of both the American continents at the period of their discovery by the Europeans. Beyond these, the ruins afford no traces of the life and habits of their former occupants. There is, however, one mysterious feature connected with these buildings, and observed even in those most distant from each other, which is of the utmost importance, not only as further proving the similarity of thought and feeling, because of sign and symbol existing between their respective populations, but still more as affording a connecting link between these populations and some of the tribes which to this day inhabit the North American continent. We allude to the print of a red hand, which has been found on the walls of the edifices in almost all the cities explored. The sign of the hand, we are told, is not painted, but seems literally printed upon the stones by the pressure of the living hand while moist with the paint, as every minute line and seam of the palm is visible. It is a remarkable fact, that this same sign constantly recurs on the skins of animals purchased from the Indian hunters on the Rocky Mountains, and it is indeed said to be in common use among the tribes in the north. According to Mr. Schoolcraft, a gentleman who has devoted much attention to the habits and customs of the Indians, and quoted by Mr. Stephens, the figure of the human hand is used by the North American Indians to denote supplication to the Great Spirit, and it stands in their system of picture-writing as the symbol of strength, power, or mastery, thus derived.

By analogies such as the above must the history of the deserted cities and their inhabitants be traced, for their walls and sculptures are the only records

of them extant. Among those that we have mentioned, the name of Copan, indeed, holds a place in the history of the Spanish conquest, a city of this name being mentioned as having revolted against the Spaniards in 1530, and as having bravely resisted the attacks of the Spanish soldiers sent to bring it back to subjection. But the general belief is, that these ruins are of a date much anterior to this period; and there are points in the Spanish narrative of the reduction of Copan which could not be applied to a city surrounded by such strong walls as the one whose ruins we have surveyed. Of the ruins now designated by the appellation of Palenque, not even the name is known, as has been seen, and no tradition hovers round the spot to tell of its past glory: the tale is left to its sculptured walls, and even these will not long survive to tell it. Of Uxmal the same may be said. The name of these ruins is derived from that of the estate on which they stand; in the oldest deed belonging to the family who owns this property, and which goes back 140 years, they are referred to as Las Casas di Piedras, the common appellation for the ruined structures throughout the country. Of the past existence of Kabah not a record or a tradition is extant. These remains lie upon the common lands of the village of Nohcacab, and their very presence was unknown until the opening of a road to Bolanchen disclosed them in the bosom of the wood. The ruins of Chichen, being situated on both sides of the great road which leads to Valladolid, one of the principal modern cities of Yucatan, and full in sight of all passers-by, are, in consequence, more generally known to the people of the country, and the name of this city is recorded in history as that of the first place in the interior where the Spaniards halted. Whether the town was then inhabited, and in the full blaze of that splendor which the magnificent remains indicate, or whether it were already then deserted, is, however, unsettled, for the Spanish chronicler merely mentions the locality as a favorable and strong position for defense against the Indians, on account of the great buildings that were there. However this may be, the reader has no doubt been struck with the general resemblance of the buildings and other monuments which we have been describing to those of Mexico on the arrival of Cortez. The palace of Palenque, or the house of the Nuns at Uxmal, at once familiarize us with the edifice in which he and his companions were lodged by Montezuma; and the vast pyramidal structures call to mind the great Teocalli, which was the first victim of the fanatic fury of the invaders. The total absence of every vestige of the habitations of the humbler classes of the community also leads to the conclusion that the resemblance of these cities to those of Mexico does not stop here, but that, here as there, the houses of the people must have been of much frailer materials than those of their rulers, whether these were kings, nobles, or priests, and could not long survive their abandonment. Indeed the Spanish historian Herrera, who, in describing Yucatan, says, 'there were so many and such stately stone buildings that it was amazing,' adds—'their houses (dwelling-houses) were all of timber, and thatched.' But why were these cities abandoned? Here the mystery again thickens, and here the analogy to Mexico seems no longer to hold good. The subjugation of Yucatan was thrown so much into the shade by the more splendid achievements of the

conquests of Mexico and Peru, which, though later known, were more speedily brought under the Spanish yoke, that the glowing descriptions which reached Spain from those countries were not followed by similar ones from Yucatan; nor are there any records of the Spaniards having in this country, as in the two former, waged a war of destruction against the national monuments of the natives. To this day the Spanish population in the peninsula is far from numerous, and is gathered in a few large towns; while the Indians generally dwell in villages under the guidance of a Roman Catholic priest, or settle themselves in the immediate vicinity of the haciendas or estates which dot the country, and give their services to the proprietor in return for the permission to draw water from the well or cistern of his establishment. Even the face of the country seems to be pretty much the same as it was at the period of the Conquest. The great dearth of springs and rivers renders it unqualified for cultivation, and the immense forests of logwood continue to constitute its greatest riches. Therefore, although it must be admitted that the Spaniards, on their arrival, found the Indians in possession of towns, which from the incidental mention of them that occurs in the chronicles of the period, seem to have borne very much the same character as those we have been surveying, yet it is difficult to conceive how, within little more than two centuries (we refer to the date of the discovery of the ruins of Palenque), these cities came to be so completely abandoned and forgotten, and that by a race remarkable for the great tenacity with which it clings to its old customs and institutions. In Mexico, where every vestige of their ancient faith and policy was systematically eradicated, and where the native population of Spanish descent is comparatively very numerous, the Indians have, nevertheless, retained so strong a traditional feeling of reverence for their ancient faith, that when two idols were accidentally disinterred in the city of Mexico a few years ago, they secretly, in the night, crowned these objects of their former adoration with wreaths of flowers; but in Yucatan and other districts, they live within a few miles, nay, in some cases a few steps, of the remains of their gorgeous temples, and know not of their existence; and when the ruins are pointed out to them, and they are asked who were the builders, their only answer is an indifferent 'Who knows?'

Whoever may have been the builders of the cities of Central America, one thing is established by their discovery—namely, that the civilization which once embellished these regions must have sprung from the same source as that of Mexico, though whether it was more ancient or more modern, must, notwithstanding all the speculation and ingenuity which has been expended on these subjects, still remain unsettled. That some of the cities, at all events, have been ruined and abandoned at the time of the Spanish conquest, there are incidents in the history of that period that lead us to believe. In the narrative of his travels in these regions, Mr. Stephens mentions, at a distance of ten leagues from Palenque, a village called Las Tres Cruces, which, tradition says, derived its name from three crosses that Cortez placed there when on his way from Mexico to Honduras; and justly remarks, that it is not probable that one whose aim was conquest and plunder, should have passed by a city of such importance as Palenque must have been when in the full

meridian of its glory, without being attracted by its fame; nor is it probable that this fame should not have reached his ears, had the city not been already then, as now—a city of the wilderness, desolate and forgotten. But if ruins such as these, so ancient as to have been forgotten, and their very sites unknown, existed at the period of the Conquest, the civilization of these countries could not have been of recent date; for there is no reason to believe that cities of palaces, the foundations of which were artificial mountains, whose construction required an amount of toil almost inconceivable, and the decoration of which must likewise have cost years of labor, have sprung up at the wave of an enchanter's wand, and been abandoned from such caprice as makes a child weary of its new toy. To be utterly unknown, the ruins must have been out of sight; and to be out of sight, forests of slow growth must have had time to close their dark curtain around them. But whence, then, came this ancient race of city-builders; where was the cradle of its civilization? This question has led to speculations, to enumerate which would far surpass our bounds, and would also be beside our purpose; suffice it to say, that the study of American monuments and traditions, and the analogies which have been descried in them to those of the most ancient people of the Old World, have been thought to prove the descent of the Red men of America from the Phœnicians, the Carthaginians, the Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Hindoos, Chinese, Tartars, Malays, and Polynesians.

Without attempting to go as far back as the first settlement of the red race on the continent of America, and to enter the regions of pure speculation, we may, however, trace its civilization back at least a thousand years before the Conquest. The Mexicans, it will be remembered, admitted that in their pyramidal structures they had imitated the earlier works of the Toltecs. This race is the earliest of which any knowledge can be derived from the traditions and picture-writings of the Mexicans. According to these, this people, constituting a powerful nation, arrived from a country somewhere to the north-east of Mexico, whence they emigrated, for some unknown cause, at the commencement of the sixth century of our era; and after about 104 years' wandering through the intervening countries, made an irruption upon the great table-land and valley of Mexico, territories bearing in the language of the country the name of Anahuac. Having established an empire under a monarchical form of government, they ruled the country during four centuries, built large cities, and spread civilization around them. After the expiration of this period, they were smitten by pestilence and famine, their numbers dwindled, some portions of the population migrated southward toward Yucatan and Guatemala; and in Anahuac they were superseded in power by other tribes coming from the same direction as they, and of whom the Aztecs or Mexicans of the time of the Spanish conquest were the last. Each of these tribes, in its turn, seems to have adopted as much of the civilization of the Toltecs as was extant on its arrival; and as the remains in Mexico, though evidently of different dates, do not present characteristics of any distinct civilization, it is probable that the archetype, of which the remains throughout the whole of the southern part of North America are but

slight modifications, has been that of the Toltecs, or of the people from whom they had borrowed it; that it is their architecture, their astronomical division of time, their mythology, and their religious observances and customs, which prevailed throughout these regions. It cannot, however, be maintained with any certainty, notwithstanding the records of the Toltec migration from the north-west, that the territories situated in that direction were the first seat of population and civilization on the American continent. There is, on the contrary, reason to believe that the population and civilization of Yucatan, Guatemala, and Chiapas, had been anterior to those of Mexico; and that thence they have been diffused through the north, whence the populations have again returned southward by one of those refluxes which are common in the early history of nations.

That civilization has at one period extended far to the north-east of Mexico into the territories which, at the period of the discovery of America by Columbus, were inhabited by rude and savage tribes, modern research has sufficiently established. From the Gulf of Mexico to the southern shores of the great lakes in the United States, earthworks and fortifications have been traced entirely distinct from the works of the Indians, giving evidence of a state of civilization greatly surpassing theirs, yet proving much affinity between the two, and at the same time exhibiting features that show them to be links of the great chain which extends southward also. In the states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, the Teocalli-shaped structures, of large dimensions, continue to form the leading feature. Further northward, however, in the region watered by the Ohio and its tributaries, though the ancient earthworks are still of considerable magnitude, and in numerous instances of the pyramidal form, terraced, and with a graded ascent to the top, yet a divergence from the system pursued in Mexico is visible in the greater prevalence of the conical-formed mound, as also in the existence of numerous inclosures formed by embankments of earth and stone. By their number, the regularity of their form, and the vastness of their dimensions, these embankments give an imposing idea of the number and capabilities of the people who raised them. In the State of Ohio alone, the number of tumuli raised by the hand of man is estimated at no less than 10,000, and the inclosures are rated at from between 1000 to 1500. Some of these are of course of minor dimensions, while others are of extraordinary magnitude. Inclosures of 100 or 200 acres are said not to be infrequent, and works are occasionally found inclosing as many as 400 acres. On the Missouri, indeed, there is an inclosure embracing an area of 600 acres, while embankments varying in height from five to thirty feet, and inclosing areas of from one to fifty acres, are of common occurrence. However, the amount of labor expended on the works cannot always, we are told, be calculated according to the extent of the area inclosed; for a fortified hill in Highland county, Ohio, has one mile and five-eighths of heavy embankments, which inclose an area of no more than forty acres. On the Little Miami river in Warren county, in the same state, are similar works, presenting upward of four miles of embankment, inclosing little more than a hundred acres; and a group at the mouth of the Scioto present an aggregate of about twenty miles of embankment, while the

extent of the space inclosed hardly amounts to two hundred acres. The mounds are likewise of various dimensions, some being only a few yards in diameter, and a few feet in height; while others—as, for instance, one at the mouth of Grave creek, Virginia; another at Miamisburg, Ohio; and the truncated pyramid at Cahokia, Illinois—have respectively a perpendicular altitude of seventy, sixty-eight, and ninety feet, and measure in circumference at the base, respectively, 1000, 852 and 2000 feet. The area on the truncated summit of the latter measures seven acres, and that of Miamisburg is calculated to contain 311,353 cubic feet. At Selzerstown, Mississippi, there is another great mound, said to cover six acres of ground. With regard to these gigantic structures, an American writer observes, 'We have seen mounds which would require the labor of a thousand men employed on our canals, with all their mechanical aids and the improved implements of their labor for months. We have more than once hesitated in view of these prodigious mounds whether it were not really a natural hill. But they are uniformly so placed in reference to the adjacent country, and their conformation is so unique and similar, that no eye hesitates long in referring them to the class of artificial erections.' The ordinary dimensions of the mounds are, however, considerably inferior to those here mentioned, and generally range from six to thirty feet in perpendicular height by forty to a hundred in diameter at the base.

In accordance with their different characters, these earth and stone-works have, by scientific inquirers, been classed under several heads—namely, Inclosures for Defense; Sacred and Miscellaneous Inclosures; Mounds of Sacrifice, Temple Mounds, Sepulchral Mounds, etc., which at once indicate the various purposes for which they are supposed to have served, partly from their resemblance to those of Mexico, the purposes of which are known, and partly from their unmistakable characteristics. The works, the features of which prove beyond a doubt that they must have been constructed for defense, usually occupy strong natural positions, which give evidence of having been selected with profound skill and great care. They are all contiguous to water, generally on the steep banks of a stream, by which one side of the inclosed area is defended, and the vicinity of higher lands from which they might be commanded has everywhere been avoided. While the approaches, in general, are made as difficult as possible, access to the fortified position is, on one or two points, allowed to be comparatively easy; and for the protection of these points the skill of the builders has been taxed to the utmost. A watch-tower or alarm-post, in the guise of a mound, is generally found close to them; and they are defended by two, or sometimes more, overlapping or concentric walls. In addition to the skill evinced in the choice of position, we must further remark the industry that has reared the works, and the strong conviction of their necessity which must have been entertained, as the stones which, together with earth, form the component parts of the walls, are often foreign to the locality, and must have been brought from a considerable distance. In a large proportion of the works the square and the circle, separate or in combination, very frequently occur; and it has been ascertained by careful admeasurement that in almost every case where they

do occur, and even in those cases where the embankments and circumvallations are as much as a mile and upward in extent, the circles are perfect circles, and the rectangular works perfect squares, circumstances which prove that the builders must have proceeded on scientific principles. It has also been proved that wherever the locality has been deficient in a natural supply of water, or the position of the works has rendered access to this difficult, the deficiency has been rectified by the establishment of artificial reservoirs within the fortifications.

Those inclosures which, from their peculiarities and position, are deemed not to have been intended for defense, and are consequently supposed to have constituted that sacred line which, among all primitive people, has marked the boundary of the space consecrated to their religious worship, are frequently of very considerable extent. This circumstance has induced the belief that they have not only inclosed that which has strictly been considered the Temple, but that they have embraced likewise some sacred grove, as was the case among the ancient Britons and other nations of the Old World; or, what is more probable, the dwellings of the priesthood, as was the case in Mexico and Peru. The correctness of applying a sacred character to these inclosures is proved by the numerous earthen altars which have been found in the inclosed areas, as also by the frequent recurrence of pyramidal structures within their precincts, which fully correspond to those of Mexico and Central America, except that they are not constructed with stone, and that, instead of being ascended by broad flights of steps, their summits are reached by graded avenues or spiral pathways. Upon the summits there are indeed no vestiges of buildings or mural remains; but as the builders had probably either declined from, or not attained to, the same degree of civilization as the constructors of the southern cities, their edifices may have been of wood, and consequently more perishable. In the Southern United States, from Florida to Texas, the remains, as has been stated, approach nearest to those of Mexico and Central America; the mounds are pyramidal in form, and their relative positions seem to imply a regular system: broad terraces of various heights, elevated causeways, and long avenues, are of frequent occurrence; but inclosures, and particularly those of a military character, are rare. In these states, however, much remains to be learned relative to the aboriginal remains, which are only now being scientifically and systematically examined.

With reference to all these works the same remark will hold good, that though tribes of half-savage Indians in different parts of the country have erected fortifications, in many respects evincing a certain degree of affinity to the ancient works alluded to, they are invariably greatly inferior to these; and though the Indians are sometimes found occupying the sites of the various non-military structures, and apparently putting them to uses in a great measure similar to those for which they are supposed to have been originally intended, yet, independently of all other indications, the tribes in these cases always confess that they are availing themselves of the works of predecessors of a much anterior date—predecessors to whom, in their traditions, they always assign great superiority over themselves. The strongest and most indisputable evidence in favor of the antiquity of these works of man is, how-

ever, afforded by the monuments which nature has raised on their ruins. In numerous cases where the forest-trees, which now cover the great majority of these mounds and embankments, have been examined, annual rings, denoting a growth of from 600 to 800 years, have been counted on their trunks. But even these 800 years do not bring us near to the date of the erection of the works; for it has been observed by those who have given attention to these matters, that a homogeneity of character is peculiar to the first growth of trees on lands once cleared and then abandoned to nature, whereas the sites of the ancient works which we have been describing, present the same appearance as the circumjacent forests, being covered with the same beautiful variety of trees. In a discourse on the aborigines of the Ohio, the late President Harrison, after having stated that upon the first clearing of the forest, certain trees of strong and rapid growth, spring up in such profusion, as entirely to smother the others of more weakly nature which attempt to grow in their shade, expresses himself as follows:—‘This state of things will not, however, always continue: the preference of the soil for its first growth, ceases with its maturity: it admits of no succession on the principle of legitimacy: the long undisputed masters of the forest may be thinned by the lightning, the tempests, or by diseases peculiar to themselves; and whenever this is the case, one of the oft-rejected of another family will find between its decaying roots shelter and appropriate food, and springing into vigorous growth, will soon push its green foliage to the skies through the decayed and withering limbs of its blasted and dying adversary; the soil itself, yielding it a more liberal support than any scion from the former occupants. It will easily be conceived what a length of time it will require for a denuded tract of land, by a process so slow, again to clothe itself with the amazing variety of foliage which is the characteristic of the forests of these regions. Of what immense age, then, must be those works, so often recurred to, covered, as has been supposed by those who have the best opportunity of examining them, *with the second growth after the ancient forest state had been regained!*’

In the north and north-western part of the territory over which these ancient remains spread, in Wisconsin, and also in a certain measure in Michigan, Iowa, and Missouri, the earthworks assume a character so different from any we have as yet surveyed, as almost to induce the belief that they must be the productions of a distinct race; yet the transition is not abrupt, for instances of the peculiar mounds which we are about to describe, occur, though isolated, in Ohio also. The works to which we allude are described as structures of earth, frequently of gigantic dimensions as to length and breadth, bearing the forms of beasts, birds, reptiles and even of men, and ‘constituting huge *basso-relievos* upon the face of the country.’ From their relative position and proximity, there is reason to believe that each has formed part of a general design or system, particularly as they are interspersed with other mounds of circular, quadrangular, and oblong shape, of considerable dimensions, and short lines of embankment, which latter, however, never form inclosures. The animal-shaped mounds are situated upon the undulating prairies and level plains; and thus, though they are of

inconsiderable height—varying from one to four feet, and in rare instances only reaching an elevation of six feet—they are distinctly visible, and the imagination is not taxed to trace in them the resemblances of bears, alligators, foxes, pigs, men or monkeys, and birds. Like the embankments of the Ohio valley, they principally occur in the vicinity of the large water-courses, and are always placed above the reach of the annual inundations: The extraordinary care with which the minutiae of details have been attended to in the construction of these huge bas-reliefs, is strikingly exemplified in one in the shape of a serpent, which occurs in the state of Ohio, and the description of which we extract from a very valuable and important work on the antiquities of North America, recently published and entitled, ‘Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley. By E. G. Squier, Esq., A. M., and E. H. Davies, M. D.’ ‘It [the serpent] is situated upon a high, crescent-form hill or spur of land, rising 150 feet above the level of Brush creek, which washes its base. The side of the hill next the stream presents a perpendicular wall of rock, while the other slopes rapidly. The top of the hill is not level, but slightly convex, and presents a very even surface, 150 feet wide, by 1000 long. Conforming to the curve of the hill, and occupying its very summit, is the serpent, its head resting on the point, and its body winding back for 700 feet in graceful undulations, terminating in a triple coil at the tail. The entire length, if extended, would not be less than 1000 feet. The outline of this work is clearly and boldly defined, the embankment being upwards of five feet in height by thirty feet base at the center of the body, but diminishing somewhat toward the head and tail. The neck of the serpent is stretched out, and slightly curved; and its mouth is opened wide, as if in the act of swallowing or ejecting an oval figure, which rests partially within the distended jaws. This oval is formed by an embankment of earth without any perceptible opening, four feet in height, and is perfectly regular in outline—its transverse and conjugate diameters being 160 and eighty feet respectively. The ground within the oval is slightly elevated; a small circular elevation of large stones, much burned, which once existed in its center, has been thrown down and scattered. The point of the hill within which this egg-shaped figure rests seems to have been artificially cut to conform to its outline, leaving a smooth platform, ten feet wide, and somewhat inclining inward, all around it.

‘Upon either side of the serpent’s head, extend two small triangular elevations, ten or twelve feet over. They are not high; and although too distinct to be overlooked, are yet too much obliterated to be satisfactorily traced.’

Another of these embossed figures in Wisconsin is described as follows:— ‘It represents a human figure having two heads, which gracefully recline over the shoulders. It is well preserved. The arms are disproportionately long. The various parts of the figure are gracefully rounded; the stomach and breasts are full and well proportioned.’ Its dimensions are, from one arm-pit over the breast to the other, twenty-five feet; across the arms at the shoulders, twelve; and tapering to four feet at the extremities. Over the hips the breadth is twenty feet; and over the legs, near the body, eight; and

tapering to five. The figure above the shoulders measures in width fifteen feet, each neck eight, and the heads ten. The length of the body is fifty feet. The elevation of the breasts, and shoulders, and abdomen is thirty-six inches; the arms at the junction of the shoulders are the same height, diminishing toward their extremities to ten inches; the thighs near the trunk are twenty, and at the feet but ten inches in height.

Some of these mounds have been excavated, and found to contain human remains; and it has also been ascertained that some of the Indian tribes at present inhabiting the localities deposit their dead in them, though they possess no traditions relative to them, nor has any existing tribe ever been known to construct similar tumuli. The fact of their having at some period or other served for interment, has led Mr. R. C. Taylor, a gentleman who has given them much attention, to express the ingenious suggestion, that they may really, originally, have served as sepulchral mounds, and that the figures of the various animals may have been intended to indicate the cemeteries of the various families or tribes. Among these peculiar works in Wisconsin, occurs one which again presents the missing link in the chain which extends from the Gulf of Mexico to the confines of Canada: this is an inclosure upon the west bank of the Rock river, consisting of a wall of partially-burnt clay, five feet high by twenty-five feet base, inclosing an area of about twenty acres, over which are scattered a number of truncated pyramids, forty or fifty feet square upon the top, and between fifteen and twenty in height, two of which are connected with each other by an elevated way similar to those which occur in Mississippi and Louisiana. In a paragraph in one of the reports of the United States Exploring Expedition, mention is made of the existence of mounds in the Oregon territory also; but as yet, it has not been ascertained whether these present any affinities to, and may be embraced in, the system of which we have been treating. That they are of frequent occurrence upon the river Gila in California, and also upon the tributaries of the Colorado of the west has also but recently been ascertained. On the banks of the river Gila, indeed, it has been asserted that ruins of an ancient city have been met with covering more than a square league, and the buildings of which were analogous to those of the south of Mexico. This led to the supposition that in these territories the Toltecs had made one of their halts on their way to the valley of Anahuac, and that their original country was in consequence located somewhere in the 'far west;' but a more accurate knowledge of the localities has led to the abandonment of this opinion, and it is now considered more probable that whatever degree of ancient civilization had reached the countries along the North American shores of the Pacific, has spread thence from Mexico.

It is not only the earthen structures and stone edifices throughout America which attest the antiquity of the civilization of that continent—the identity of descent in all its inhabitants, up to the time of its discovery by the Spaniards, and the decline of the greater number of its nations from a cultivated to a savage state; the remains of the manufactures and arts of the people, obtained by excavation, their pictorial arts, their system of hieroglyphics, their modes of interment, their national games and dances, their treatment of their

prisoners, their language, and their religion, combine to establish the same conclusion. But however interesting these may be in themselves, and in what they demonstrate, our limits preclude our entering upon them.

With regard to what may be more strictly termed the living testimonies which may serve to shed some faint light upon the strange extinction of civilization throughout regions so vast, they are but slight, yet not devoid of significance. Among several of the Indian tribes of the United States, there exist traditions of their having originally migrated from the west, and of their ancestors having, during their passage eastward, come into hostile collision with, and ultimately defeated, people living in fortified towns. Among the Delaware Indians, for instance, the story goes that, many centuries ago, the great race of the Lenni-Lenapi inhabited a territory far to the west; and that, when subsequently they began to move eastward, they came upon a numerous and civilized people, to whom they give the name of Alligewi, occupying the country on the eastern banks of the Mississippi, and living in fortified cities. Having applied to this people for permission to cross the river, and to continue their route eastward through their territory, the demand was first acceded to, on condition of the Indians promising not to make settlements within their boundaries—but subsequently, it would seem, repented of; for during the passage of the river the Indians were attacked by the Alligewi. A fierce and obstinate struggle ensued; and the Lenni-Lenapi having made common cause with the Iroquois, who had likewise reached the Mississippi in their migration eastward, the two roving Indian tribes made such fierce and repeated assaults upon the Alligewi, that, to avoid extermination, the latter abandoned their towns and territory, and fled down the banks of the river. The traditions of the Iroquois bear out this of the Lenni-Lenapi; and in every case the Indians dwelling in the localities of the various mounds and earthworks attribute these to a people at an early date exterminated by their forefathers, and never assume them to be the works of the latter. As we have said, the light thus shed upon the history of the past is faint, yet significant, in as far as it seems to reveal the same traces of a downward course in the path of civilization which appear everywhere in connection with the history of the aborigines of America—a race the wild suckers of which, having grown up in rank luxuriance, had at the period of the arrival of the Europeans well-nigh annihilated the original cultivated and fruit-bearing parent stem.

